

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 57

TIME
2 July 1984

An Anonymous 007 Theory

Almost ten months after a Soviet fighter shot down Korean Air Lines Flight 007, killing all 269 aboard, the precise circumstances of the tragedy remain a mystery. Last week an anonymous author in the British magazine *Defence Attaché* accused the U.S. of accidentally provoking the attack by using the airliner to gather intelligence about Soviet air defenses. The plane, the author said, deliberately overflew Soviet territory in order to test Soviet reflexes as the space shuttle *Challenger* and a U.S. Ferret-D electronic data-gathering satellite watched from above.

The Soviet accusation last September was very similar; the only new element is the claim that the space shuttle was involved. But NASA officials stress that *Challenger* was never close enough to the Korean airliner to monitor radio or radar activity. Moreover, said Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, "had we wanted to test Soviet radar, there are a lot better ways to do it than with a 747 jumbojet full of civilians." Moscow certainly remains eager to promote its version of events. It has taken the unusual step of allowing a well-known U.S. investigative journalist, Seymour Hersh, to interview Soviet Chief of Staff Nikolai Ogarkov about the shooting and to visit a Soviet airbase.

STAT